



NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES

Office of Legislative Affairs

October 1, 2020

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman, Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman, Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman, Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Inhofe, Smith, Shelby, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Members Reed, Thornberry, Leahy, and Granger,

On behalf of the Navy League of the United States, I am writing to express our support for including funding for a second Virginia-class attack submarine hull in the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This critical platform serves as a cornerstone of our National Defense Strategy, and it is essential to countering near-peer rivals such as Russia and China.

As defense leadership has made clear, these fast-attack vessels will serve as the "tip of the spear" as America shifts its focus to great power competition. Our ability to deter enemy aggression with superior naval forces reduces the risk of largescale military conflict, providing America the ability to facilitate from a position of strength. With a diminished SSN force our adversaries would be more encouraged to engage in aggressive and destabilizing naval adventures around the globe. This second Virginia-class submarine justifiably tops the Navy's FY21 Unfunded Priorities List, as it is vital to maintaining America's undersea dominance and to countering rising naval threats. The looming "valley" in FY27/28 with a projected 24 boat shortfall of the 66 SSN goal as Los Angeles-class boats retire would erode one of our fleet's clear advantages, leaving a severe deficit of these vital platforms.

While we understand the intent of the Senate's choice to authorize advanced procurement funding only, we are concerned by several outstanding issues. First, we cannot predict the budget outlook for the coming years with any certainty, and funding this hull may be difficult with the current economic

outlook. Now is the time to provide these funds, not later. Second, our shipbuilding industrial base deserves the consistency and stability provided by continuing to fund the same number of hulls. As shipbuilders plan their operations and assess their need for skilled workers far in advance, so predictability is crucial. Third, fully funding the second Virginia-class attack submarine hull demonstrates our commitment and dedication to undersea dominance to near-peer adversaries.

The House-passed NDAA, as well as appropriations legislation, recognizes the urgent nature of this particular procurement program and includes two Virginia-class hulls for FY21. We hope the final bill will reflect this priority. Thank you for the stalwart leadership in support of our national defense and military readiness. I applaud your continued commitment to America's military and veteran community and look forward to continue working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. A. Stevenson III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the last name "Stevenson" being more legible than the first and middle initials.

William A Stevenson III
National President,
Navy League of the United States